The Communist Party

Newspaper of the International Communist Party

WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY – The line running from Marx to Lenin to the foundation of the Third International and the birth of the Communist Party of Italy in Leghorn (Livorno) 1921, and from there to the struggle of the Italian Communist Left against the degeneration in Moscow and to the rejection of popular fronts and coalition of resistance groups – The tough work of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and the party organ, in contact with the working class, outside the realm of personal politics and electoralist manoevrings

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England

The General Election Is not in the Interests of the Working Class

The date announced for the General Election of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, on 4 July, 2024, was unexpected. It had been thought that the Conservative government would wait until autumn, or even later, in the hope of better economic news, or at least less bad news regarding growth and inflation affecting the cost of living for most of the population. The indications were that this was unlikely to happen, so an election was called with little notice. The growing political crisis in the Tory hierarchy was obvious, with a large number of MPs abandoning the sinking ship. It is now increasingly clear that taxes will increase, and cuts will be made to public spending, no matter what the politicians promise, and whichever party forms the next Government.

As in all elections, the various openly capitalist parties are competing for votes on the basis that their policies will make people better off, while being "costed" responsibly. Yet, no matter which party is involved in the next Government, an economic crisis is coming – and attacks will be made on the living standards of the working class, in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole.

No matter which gang wins in any general election, the government will be called upon to implement measures to protect the national economy, such as the nationalization of industries that are vital to the national economy but are unprofitable or inefficient in private hands. The interests of capitalism come first, last and always. The working class has no champion in this fight.

The Labour Party has been historically projected to be the political wing of the labor movement, in part financed by the political levy of trade union funding. But it has always distanced itself from its origins as a representative of organized labor, defending the fiction of the "national interest", which merely disguises the reality of conflicting class interests. There may be the occasional hint at state control or public ownership, but this is never in the interests of the working class, but in this "national interest", i.e., the interest of the capitalist system as a whole and the UK's capitalist national interests in particular. There is not a shred of socialism in any of it, and never has been. The Labour Party as a whole has never wanted to do anything which undermines capitalist society. There may be the occasional rebels who make a lot of noise. They serve to give the party some credibility but always end up being pulled back into line, or quietly sidelined.

Indeed, the Labour Party is certainly capable of sounding more or less radical depending on the political climate. Under the leadership of Sir Keir Starmer, it looks and sounds almost identical to the Tories. It has no program for reform and has purged itself of any left-leaning "unreliable elements" such as the Corbynites. It has even refused to consider reversing some of the worst welfare benefit cuts implemented by the original coalition Government of 2010-5 when the Conservatives went into partnership with the Liberal Democrats to attack the poorest sectors of society. Ever since the Blair leadership, the Labour Party has increasingly marketed itself as the party of business, openly courting – and being courted by – various large capitalist enterprises.

Many trade union leaders and Labour Party activists get misty eyed harking back to the 1945 Labour Government, which brought in measures that were needed to rebuild society after the Second World War. The National Health Service and welfare reforms were an improvement on the Poor Law Provisions, which were not formally abolished until 1948. But they were essentially put in place to ensure that the working class was just about healthy enough to get back to work, and to bring up the next generations of wage slaves. There was nothing remotely socialist about any of this, and nothing which could lead to the emancipation of the working class.

The reality is that, in contrast to 1945, or, for that matter, subsequent electoral victories for the Labour Party, very few people are now taken in by promises of reform. Consequently, the pressure is on, from all quarters, to get people involved in, and engaged with, the election debates. Just vote for somebody, even without illusions, or while holding your noses, because the future of the country may be at stake. The entire spectrum of the bourgeois media leveraged the D-Day anniversary on 6 June, for example, to persuade the public that thousands had died to protect democracy, to protect "your right" to vote (after all, nothing guilts workers into voting like patriotism). So much so that when Prime Minister Sunak left the D-Day celebrations early, the opposition parties all kicked up a fuss and the PM himself offered a groveling apology for his "error of judgment".

Elections Settle Nothing!

An election cannot change the course of the capitalist economy (other than in the most superficial and short-term movements of economic indicators, based on investor confidence in the incoming administration's ability to steer the ship that is the State in the interests of the capitalist class). The attacks that the working class will face because of the growing crisis of capitalism will be implemented by whatever government is elected, regardless of the promises made and regardless of party affiliation. Members of Parliament are employed by the State to look after the interests of capitalism. In return, they are allowed to feather their own nests, insofar as this is not perceived as outright corruption that brings the system into disrepute. Meanwhile the exploitation of the working class, the great majority of society, will continue whoever occupies Number 10 Downing Street.

The working class instinctively knows this but is yet to take the next step towards taking power for itself.

The working class makes and remakes this world every single day. Because of this, the working class can look forward to a better world to come, without exploitation, poverty, insane economic crises and wars. In this election, which is dominated by the issue of immigration, the working class can also look forward to a world without national borders and without the compulsion for millions of workers to migrate in search of work. But this can only be brought about by the overthrowing of capitalism and its replacement with a communist society in which people give according to ability and take according to need. Communism will end the worldwide regime of insane overproduction, waste and perpetual threats to the ecology of the planet. Rational production to meet humanity's true needs will be well within the resources of the planet, without capitalism's current "greenwashing" babble about sustainability.

Communism will end poverty and war. But this can never be achieved, in whole or in part, by voting for any party – especially those which falsely claim to be communist or socialist. It can only be achieved through the seizure of power by the only force that can transform society – the working class, led by the International Communist Party.

Bangladesh A new social upheaval comes to shake a young capitalism

But the student and popular movements prove powerless in the face of Capitalism and can only delude themselves into thinking they are reforming it.

Only the working class - organised in powerful class unions and led by the communist party - can fulfil the historic task of overthrowing it

After the social uprisings that have shaken Tunisia, Egypt, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka and, a few weeks ago, Kenya over the past 15 years, in Bangladesh a new eruption emanates from the social underground.

In our article last January, "Bangladesh: Factories grow – Conflicts between bourgeois marauders erupt – Class struggle flares up", we described the scenario from which emerged the powerful struggle of the textile workers, more than 4 million across the country, with demands for 200% wage increases. At the end of the strike they only got 56%, a breath of fresh air. A struggle therefore only momentarily appeased, an example for all workers, destined to flare up again in a short time.

The picture of the social crisis

Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world, after Nigeria; the largest in terms of density, considering states with a population of at least 10 million. Its 173 million and growing inhabitants live in an area slightly larger than Greece, which has about 10 million inhabitants. More than 30% of the inhabitants are under 15 years of age. 17% of the population is illiterate.

For several years, statistics have been pointing to a continuous growth of capitalist accumulation in Bangladesh. The country attracts more and more capital thirsty for surplus value, which is mainly realised in the textile industry, which accounts for 85% of exports.

But almost 3/4 of the population still lives in the countryside and half of the working population is employed in agriculture. The exploitative conditions of the working class, with low wages, unemployment and rising inflation, are thus compounded by the social contradictions of a young capitalism, with the ruin and urbanisation of hundreds of thousands of poor peasants and just as many taking the path of emigration.

In 2019, there were 23 million Bengalis considered to be in "extreme poverty". In 2022, 500,000 were added, while the "moderately poor" increased by 800,000. According to World Bank criteria, "extreme poverty" is defined as those with an income of less than USD 2.15 per day, rising to USD 3.65 for "moderate poverty". According to forecasts by the previous Bengali government, this will increase in the coming years.

The structure of the territory makes it, in the world of capital, vulnerable. It is the great delta of the Ganges-Brahmaputra river system, spread over more than 700 arms. In the last twenty years, there have been over 200 extreme weather events, often cyclones followed by floods. Parts of the land are flooded. The advancing salinity erodes riverbanks and reduces the fertility of the land. According to data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), it was the country with the highest number of people displaced by natural disasters in 2022. In 2023, there were 1.8 million internally displaced persons.

Every year, around three hundred thousand internal migrants move into the slums of the capital Dhaka. They have no choice, having lost everything to the weather or small farmers choked by debt. They seek wages to survive, usually women in textile factories, men in construction.

Bangladesh is also sixth in the world in the number of emigrants. On average 400,000 leave the country every year. Today, about 15 million Bengalis have emigrated. While the temporary ones look for a salary in Middle Eastern and South-East Asian countries, the permanent ones would like to make a new life in Great Britain, which has always been the main destination, and in other countries. In recent decades, Italy has also become a popular destination. Many are employed in shipbuilding and heavy-duty activities.

Finally, Bangladesh hosts about one million refugees of the Rohingya ethnic group in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, a city on the eastern coast near the border with Myanmar, from which they fled following the atrocious persecution perpetrated by the army under the government of Aung San Suu Kyi, another champion of non-violence and democracy, nominated in 1991 as Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Now it is about to be the turn of the Bengali proletarians to test the worth of politicians deserving of such bourgeois honours!

From student movement to popular movement

It was against this backdrop of social crisis, 10 months after the textile workers' all-out strike, that the student protests triggered a mass movement that ended with the fall of the government. Until 2018, 56% of the available posts in the civil service were reserved for specific categories: 10% for those from less economically developed areas, 10% for women, 5% for indigenous communities, 1% for the disabled and, the most contested quota, 30% for the descendants of the "freedom fighters", those who fell during the 1971 war of independence that led the then East Bengal to separation from Pakistan. The system, which favoured the grandchildren of the 300,000 or so soldiers of that war, was an important patronage tool for the bourgeois parties administering the interests of the ruling class, for the Awami League, born out of a split of the All Pakistan Muslim League, which has been in government continuously since January 2009.

A ruling in 2020 had reduced the guaranteed quotas for civil service recruitment. When the High Court reintroduced the previous quotas on 6 June, protests began, called by some student organisations in the capital's universities, demanding the complete abolition of all quotas, excluding those for the disabled and indigenous communities.

The movement thus began with a demand that, in the social framework described above, appears to affect a limited and privileged stratum of the population, those who can aspire to secure state employment, thus with a petit-bourgeois nature.

After weeks of rising tensions, the demonstrations escalated from Monday 15 July, partly due to the government's clear refusal to go along with the demands of the students, defined by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as "razakar", the term used in 1971 to refer to paramilitary collaborators of the Pakistani army.

The student movement, which began with a particular claim, acted as a catalyst for the general social discontent, generating a popular movement that, due to its nature, kept the student organisations in charge.

Clashes in the streets gradually escalated. Dhaka burst into flames. For days, the government blocked all internet services to prevent protesters from organising and imposed a curfew. Police and army switched from tear gas to stun grenades and then to shooting. The death count began. The notorious paramilitary corps RAB, Rapid Action Battalion, already well known to the Bengali working class, also intervened. Violence was also carried out by the Chhatra League, the youth wing of the ruling Awami League party.

Demonstrations even took place in the United Arab Emirates, where there are almost one million Bengali emigrants, the third largest immigrant community in the country. Fifty-seven were arrested: 53 were sentenced to 10 years in prison, one to 11 years and 3 to life imprisonment!

After a few days of harsh clashes, 200 people were already dead. Undeterred, the demonstrators stormed dozens of police stations, prisons, set fire to Awami League offices, state television and government buildings.

Faced with the strength of the movement, on 21 July the Supreme Court reduced the quota for veterans' descendants to 5%. But by then it was too late, as that was not the issue that was setting such large masses in motion. The demonstrations spread beyond the capital, to Bogura, Pabna, Rangpur, Magura, touching dozens of districts in the country.

With the waves of violence, the demands of the movement, led by student organisations, changed. A list of nine points has been drawn up: the obligation for leading members of the Awami League to resign; dismissal of all police forces in the areas where students were attacked; trial of the police forces involved in the murders; resignation of the vice-chancellors of the universities where the violence took place; ban on the Chhatra League from educational institutions; a public apology by the prime minister; compensation for the families of the victims; reopening of educational institutions.

These demands are devoid of any economic-social content that could affect the working class, they only target the ruling party and not the entire ruling class regime, for whose defence, on the contrary, they call for measures against a section of the police in order to restore a climate of trust and social peace.

On Monday, 5 August, twenty days after the protests broke out, Prime Minister Hasina, who had won a fourth term in January in an election round boycotted by the opposition, while her residence was under attack by protesters, resigned by fleeing to India in a military helicopter. The news was greeted with jubilation on the streets.

At the end of the demonstrations, various sources reported over four hundred dead, thousands injured and arrests. It is certain that much of the blood shed is that of the proletariat. As reported by one of the textile workers' union federations, the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF), some of the victims were workers, including 11 textile workers and 5 members and organisers of this union. Certainly many others were young proletarians.

The working class, however, with its organisations and demands, did not participate in the movement. The workers did so individually, following a student leadership of a popular, hence interclass movement. Strikes were neither called nor broke out spontaneously. The bosses prudently held lock-outs to prevent the working class from going on strike.

One of the reasons for Prime Minister Hasina's capitulation may have been to avoid this which is the real terror of any bourgeois regime. In Egypt, in 2010, after weeks of oceanic popular demonstrations, three days of strikes, which had by then infected the whole country, were enough for the ruling class to unseat Mubarak and implement a ferocious repression.

After the former Prime Ministe fled, schools, shops and factories were reopened within days. Demonstrations and protests ceased.

The bourgeoisie changes uniform

On 6 August, President Mohammed Shahabuddin dissolved parliament. As always, when the fiction of legislative power falls, the bourgeois regime shows the true backbone of its rule and it is the army that takes over the reins of government, waiting for the conditions to mature to restore the fiction that can interpose a levee between the bourgeois state, the machine of class rule, and the proletariat.

The army thus held a series of talks with various political parties and some student associations. An interim government was formed headed by Mohammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2006, known for the Grameen Bank "the micro-credit bank", clamoured for by the students.

In its inception, its composition, its ideology, its outcome, the Bengali movement thus appeared to express essentially the dead-end struggle of the petty-bourgeoisie, ruined by the development of a young national capitalism within the framework of a senescent global imperialist capitalism.

The new Bengali executive put a useful puppet at its head to give the petty-bourgeoisie "hope". It has also included two leaders of the "Students Against Discrimination" movement, both from Dhaka University, sons of the bourgeoisie, and assigned them petty-bourgeois posts.

To the Interior went Army Chief of Staff General M. Sakhawat Hossain, while former Central Bank Governor Salahuddin Ahmed will occupy the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning.

The "ethical banker" – supported in the past by US presidents and the International Monetary Fund – has now been placed at the head of the government, with the blessing of the Bengali military, to appease the petty-bourgeois strata that spearheaded the uprising. The new government will pretend to defend the petty-bourgeoisie no less than "left-wing" governments pretend to defend the working class.

As for the theories on ethical banking and "micro-credit", suffice it to recall that the Nobel Prize winner Prime Minister's bank, with over 2500 branches, offers one of its main loan packages at a "subsidised" interest rate of 20%.

In 2007, the banker tried, unsuccessfully, to launch a party, the Nagorik Shakti ("Power of the Citizens"), which vaguely called for the nationalisation of all banks which, finally in the hands of the "citizens' state", would have to meet the needs of the community by creating "a new model of development".

After taking the oath of office, Yunus reiterated some unequivocal concepts: "Anarchy is our enemy and must be defeated ... A return to full democracy will restore the honour and past glories of the armed and security forces ... The first task of my government and the government that emerges from the elections will be to rebuild the institutions and make Bangladesh a true democracy ... We will not tolerate any attempt to disrupt the global garment supply chain, in which we are a key player".

International capital can rest assured: the "ethical" banker will ensure the continuation of the oppression and exploitation of the working class, drawing on the democratic ideological repertoire.

The role of imperialisms

Bangladesh, like all mid- and small-scale national capitalisms, is a terrain of contention between the big imperialist powers, above all: the USA, China and India.

Over the last few decades, the Bengali bourgeoisie has taken advantage, with some success, of the rivalry between Beijing and New Delhi, juggling between the two powers. China has for years consolidated and strengthened relations with Dhaka by allocating huge sums to a country that is in a crucial geographical position for its capitalist interests. About 80% of the energy reserves needed by the Chinese giant cross the Indian Ocean and come from the Bay of Bengal. Large Chinese investments are being made in the infrastructure of the coastal countries in the area – Bangladesh and Burma – and in the construction of new pipelines. Last year, the first integrated sea-land oil storage and transport system was inaugurated in the Bengali port of Chittagong, a project executed by the China Petroleum Pipeline Bureau (CPP). An alternative, albeit partial, route to the transport of crude oil through the Strait of Malacca. In July, during the protests, the former premier visited Beijing and signed several agreements in the fields of trade, digital economy and infrastructure development. It is also worth mentioning that China is Dhaka's leading arms supplier and the first joint military exercise called Golden Friendship 2024 was announced on 25 April.

Even more obvious is the link with India, which has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in Bangladesh's energy sector and infrastructure, and which with its fleet effectively guards the Bay of Bengal. Indian influence, economic and political, is a fact. It is no coincidence that the premier has taken refuge precisely in Delhi. There is also military cooperation between the two neighbouring countries to counter fundamentalist groups in the region. Bangladesh includes the former Indian province of East Bengal. West Bengal has remained part of India and the border between the two countries still remains rather porous due to shared ethnic and linguistic ties.

US imperialism has always had a support base in the Bengali army. One of the first statements by the refugee Hasina was: "I could have remained in power if I had surrendered the island of Saint Martin, thus allowing the Americans to control the Bay of Bengal". The former Prime Minister was referring to the coral atoll, currently a marine protected area, which would be denied to the US who wanted to build a military base there.

Bangladesh did not want to join the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), a strategic alliance between Australia, Japan, India and the United States, essentially in an anti-Chinese perspective. Also along these lines, the Awami party in power until 5 August had – like India – refused to take sides in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and has long maintained fruitful relations with Russia. It is also true that Dhaka cannot afford to give up its relations with the United States, now India's ally and the leading importer of Bangladeshi-made garments.

A complex scenario, as always, that of inter-imperialist contrasts, which will have its first test in the forthcoming elections.

But it is to be ruled out that a movement of hundreds of thousands of men was set in motion by "agents" of some power, an explanation to which the ousted bourgeois factions or the bourgeoisie as a whole always resort when it sees its class domination threatened, and to which even the political wreckage of Stalinism draws, for whom history is not the product of the struggle between classes but of the manoeuvres of powerful puppeteers.

The only revolutionary programme is Communism

The Bengali uprising had a popular, i.e. inter-class character, which, by now throughout the world, can no longer confer any progressive, revolutionary function on social movements, but only perpetuate the illusion of reforming capitalism. The petty-bourgeoisie has been the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie for as long as there have been pre-bourgeois regimes to overthrow, such as the exterminated mass of poor peasants in tsarist Russia.

Once the society and regime of capital is established, this function of the petty-bourgeoisie comes to an end and it can, at the height of its radicalism, in order to oppose the historical tendency that necessarily leads it to end up in the proletariat, nurture movements that are extremist in their practical action, even to the point of individual terrorism, but conservative or openly reactionary in their political programme.

The social force that alone opposes Capital is that of the proletarian class, which in its movement to defend the living conditions of its members clashes with the laws of Profit. The political destiny of the proletarian economic class struggle is the destruction of the bourgeois state and its replacement by the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, not a change of tunic of the bourgeois regime, keeping intact its machinery of state domination, which is what a popular movement can at best aspire to. Already in last October's textile strike movement, the bourgeois opposition parties, in particular the Bangladesh National Party, had tried to break into the workers' demonstrations and divert the class demands (more wages, less hours, better living and working conditions) towards generic demands for more democracy. A banner, that of democracy, which, passed off as being above class divisions, in fact was not taken up by the working class to be taken up instead, a few months later, by the students.

Instead, the popular, petit-bourgeois character of the social movement made it far more permeable to the influences of the bourgeois parties. Islamists, liberals and fake radical parties intervened in force in the squares to vie for control of the movement. On 5 August, the same day PM Hasina fled to India, former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, a former BNP member and under arrest since 2018 for corruption, was freed by President Mohammed Shahabuddin.

The path of the wage-earning class is to defend their living conditions with ever more extensive, united and powerful strikes, for which strong class-based trade union organisations are needed. In this struggle, which springs naturally from the economic undergrowth of capitalism, the proletariat will meet, out of an objective practical necessity, the authentic communist party, overcoming decades of bewilderment generated by the course of the Stalinist counter-revolution, whose nefarious effects we see wearing off and, finally, coming to an end in these years, with their historical inertia, despite the collapse of the USSR's false socialism.

The Bengali workers will soon gauge the bourgeois nature of the new government and continue their generous trade union struggle.

The historical programme that their most advanced section, adhering to the Communist Party, will take up will be that of the drastic reduction of working hours, the abolition of wage labour, up to the struggle for power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

When the mighty movement of struggle has risen from the economic-union level to the political level, with the Communist Party taking the lead in the struggle and the trade union organisations, a part of the petty-bourgeois strata will join the movement, following the working class.

The popular uprising movements we have witnessed in the last 15 years are thus the present expression of the crisis of world capitalism, but the future is far more threatening and unmanageable for the international bourgeoisie, because it will lead to proletarian movements, therefore finally, truly revolutionary, which will open up the historical outlet of Communism.

France⊠

The Specter of Fascism Versus the Myth of Democratic Freedoms

In the face of the global economic crisis, right-wing and far-right parties are making headway in the "democratic" countries of the West. And in France, the electoral victory in the European elections of Ms. Lepen's so-called far-right party, the rassemblement national, has prompted a lightning decision by the fast-losing Macron clan to dissolve the assembly and call new elections in the coming weeks. It's another poker game, but one that has the petit bourgeois shaking in their boots, as they wave the black rag of fascism in front of the media!

Where will voters go to lose themselves between the "fascism" of the Lepen clan, backed by Mr. Bolloré's multinational corporation, which is buying up TV and radio channels and famous publishing houses; in the middle, the Macron clan, now worn down by its accelerated attacks on public institutions (education, health) and its motley foreign policy; and on the "left" side, a hodgepodge of so-called "leftist" parties under the "Popular Front" label, with Mr. Mélenchon's party accused of anti-Semitism because of its anti-Zionism and authoritarianism marked by vigorous cleansing of troublesome militants. And above all, which camp will the financiers choose? Ms. Binet's CGT is also getting involved, calling above all not to vote for the RN, knowing that some of its militants are in favor of it! As for the instability of the French government, it is not in itself an impossibility of governing. The example of Belgium, which remained without a government for two years, is indisputable proof of this.

In response to this "troubled" and "troubling" situation orchestrated from all sides, we quote the text of our current which, in June 1926, presented a platform to the 5th Congress of the PCF, a party in the process of Stalinization, which addressed French questions in its third part. The year was 1926, and France was facing an upsurge of right-wing and extreme right-wing forces. History doesn't repeat itself, but the means used by the ruling classes are the same!

"The parliamentary political system is a perfectly capitalist system, corresponding more closely to the interests of the big bourgeoisie than to those of any other class or social stratum (...) The schema representing the parliamentary struggle between the Bloc National and the Cartel des Gauches [an electoral coalition] as the conflict for power between the big bourgeoisie and the middle classes is false, since the latter are incapable of possessing an independent political regime, and Parliament is not, for Marxist critics, the place where different classes lose or gain power, but on the contrary the proper organ for the exercise and defense of the power of the capitalist bourgeoisie. The political phenomenon of the parliamentary free play of democratic and radical parties does not correspond to a kind of political abdication by the capitalist class, but rather to a particular phase and pace of its action against the proletarian class and the revolutionary danger. In this phase, the main weapon of this struggle is the subordination of working-class ideology to formulas and organizations that are the original product of petty-bourgeois circles, but in reality correspond to the aims and maneuvering of the ruling capitalist class, firmly installed not only in a parliamentary majority, but at the head of the entire state machine. This method is not the bourgeoisie's only method of struggle, and it is very possible that as the economic crisis deepens, and an employers' offensive takes shape, there will be a complete change of program in the political sphere".

And on the subject of fascism: "What is essential is to understand that the fascist plan is first and foremost a plan against the proletariat and socialist revolution, and that it is therefore up to the workers to pre-empt or repel its attack. It's a misconception to see fascism as a crusade against bourgeois democracy, the parliamentary state, the petty-bourgeois strata and their politicians and parties at the helm of power. The false schema of the French situation and its perspective consists in the 'holy war' that would be unleashed against the fascist 'danger' by 'democracy' and its latest dummy, the Bloc des Gauches, by mobilizing the forces of the state against the first 'illegal' fascist forces. According to this idea, the proletariat should only sound the alarm, take the 'initiative' – there's a buzzword for it – in this anti-fascist struggle, fight with others to defend the advantages of a 'left' government, considering the bankruptcy of fascism in France as its victorious goal, reserving other actions and conquests for himself only as a second act of the struggle, as the effect of a supposed strategy that would make him reveal to his anti-fascist allies – but let's be clear, only after the fact – the ulterior motive of conquering power for himself, the claim to his dictatorship.

"Things are very different. If fascism threatens us closely in France, it will be because the proletarian revolution will threaten bourgeois France, which is right-wing and democratic at the same time. At that moment, the middle classes will undoubtedly play a role, but in the sense that they will side with whichever of the two enemy classes proves stronger and more capable of defeating and reorganizing social life according to its historical program. Defending the status quo, or expressing negative anti-fascism instead of positive anti-capitalism, on the pretext of popularizing the proletarian party before – before what? – the proletarian party, are simply reactionary in such a decisive situation".

And again: "Both the democratic and fascist tactics of capitalism have a common goal: to avoid by any means the general, unique action of the working class on all the questions raised by the situation: for in this case, the defensive weapons of the bourgeois state may prove insufficient. Single action by the working class means not the commonplace of a bloc of different political organizations and movements with a mixed and fictitious central leadership, but the entry into struggle of the proletariat in all towns and villages, without exceptions of categories and trades: this movement can win only if we succeed in animating it with a single, precise program under the leadership of a true revolutionary party.

"To achieve this capitalist result, the Bloc des Gauches is making legislative arrangements to attenuate the impression produced on the masses by the episodes and sharp turns of the crisis, and with the help of the Socialist Party and the reformist C.G.T. it is doing what it can to localize and isolate the conflicts raised by proletarian demands".

Nothing more to say!

Global Crash

On Friday, July 19 the middle class in all countries had to deal with the "Blue Screen of Death". All companies using the Microsoft Azure system, the most widely used system in businesses, were denied access to the computer system, and on all computers at startup the words appeared: Blue Screen of Death! The freeze paralyzed activities in airports, railways, hospitals, banks, etc. all over the world.

Microsoft immediately tried to reassure customers, reporting that it was working to solve the problem. However, this led to a series of chain delays, even by a few days, in restoring the whole IT shack that basically holds up the fortunes of world capital.

We communists rejoice at these general disruptions; the Blue Screen of Death is our wish for capitalism. Let it be proven once again how fragile, inadequate and always precariously balanced it is, to which all it takes is a "breath of wind," to jam, and how the fate of proletarians at the mercy of the predatory bourgeoisie is always in danger.

This time the global damage was caused by a misreporting of a virus, which in fact did not exist. The permanent war between bourgeoisies, between their gigantic computer companies and between their state agencies of mutual sabotage makes all their apparatuses extremely vulnerable. Everything progressive that capitalism produces is invalidated and made fragile by the struggle for profit.

To put an end to the contradictions, ugliness and irrationalities of the capitalist mode of production, let us return to the words Engels writes in The Evolution of Socialism from Utopia to Science.

"Solution of the contradictions: the proletariat conquers public power by whose power it mutates the means of social production into public property, removing them from bourgeois control."

By such an act, the proletariat liberates the means of production from the capital character which they hitherto had and gives their social character full freedom to actualize itself. Planned social production becomes possible.

"The development of production makes the further existence of distinct social classes anachronistic. As the anarchy of social production disappears, so does the political authority of the state. Men, finally masters of their form of social organization, become masters of nature and masters of themselves, free."

"It is the historical mission of the modern proletariat to carry out such liberating action. It is the mission of scientific socialism, the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, to study thoroughly the historical conditions and nature of liberatory action thus giving the class now oppressed but called to action the consciousness of the conditions and nature of its due action."

The mission of the Communist Party is to lead and guide the proletariat toward social revolution in order to overthrow the infamous capitalism!

Italy: Voting is Not an Effective Tool of Struggle Worse if together with the Bosses

On April 25, the CGIL launched a new referendum campaign, promoting the collection of signatures for 4 repeals. 3 of these repeals concern parts of a law passed by a center-left government in December 2014, against which the CGIL promoted a general strike--nine days after the law was passed! These repeals, if passed, would go a long way toward alleviating the blackmail-ability of the working class, a fact that is ineradicable in capitalism, susceptible to variation depending on the power relations between classes, and which in recent decades has been exacerbated with the spread of precarious employment. However, it is very difficult to assess how much such changes would really benefit wage earners in the legislative and contractual quagmire.

We communists do not naively deny the importance of even small gains for workers forced into increasingly harsh living conditions by the society of capital. The problem should not be framed according to a superficial scheme that promotes that any improvement is to be pursued by any means. The Problem should be measured with the yardstick of whether an achievement, small or large, is a harbinger of future (greater or lesser) achievements. That is, whether it is an ephemeral and illusory improvement or a step forward in strengthening the movement of the workers' union struggle.

Included in this evaluation is necessarily the method one uses to pursue the goal. Indeed, within certain limits, the method is even more important than the goal. It is on this level that one appreciates the full contrast between the method of class unionism and that promoted by the CGIL, which is an expression of collaborationism between classes. One must also appreciate the difference between the trade union orientation of our party-which is class-based-and that of the leading groups of the trade union currents that more or less clearly refer to class unionism.

The referendum method of obtaining improvements in favor of workers must be rejected because it is the denial, in practice and in principle, of the class struggle. As always, this directive of ours is not the pre constituted, ideological, one that the hypocritical pro-unionists who run CGIL, CISL, UIL would have us believe. It is historically indisputable that the really important conquests of the working class, in all countries, has been achieved through greater, more extensive and radical struggle.

Trade union collaborationism, which limits the strike as much as possible in time and space and – avowedly – as a last resort, flourishes in periods of regression in working class conditions, leading, far from progressive small improvements, to a gradual retreat, as the last 4 decades very clearly demonstrate. Any improvements gained through a referendum would once again offer workers a miseducation in regard to struggle: that simply going to the polls would suffice, which is quite different from going on strike. By doing so, they would not create the conditions for greater workers' fighting strength; rather, they would shore up the current passivity, offering the bosses guarantees of the continuation of the conditions of social peace that have ensured years of backwardness in working-class living conditions.

The referendum method is characteristic of collaborationist trade unionism for at least two reasons: 1) members of all social classes are called upon to vote on issues affecting the working class. Therefore, the principle of interclassism, the subjugation of the working class to other classes, is affirmed by this route; 2) by the method of the secret ballot, the opinion of the backward, unorganized, individualistic worker, even the scab, is placed on the same level as the vote of the fighting workers, who by consciousness, generosity and selflessness sacrifice themselves for the collective interests of their class. For the second of these two reasons, the referendum to ratify contractual agreements should also be rejected, insofar as it involves only workers, and it is certainly no coincidence that it has always been a workhorse of the Fiom-CGIL leadership, and not only it, but a very useful tool with which the regime unions have been sanctioning and justifying national contract renewals for decades, always to no avail.

It follows from these considerations how the democratic principle is against the class struggle, which is based instead on a relationship of forces, not on the counting of opinions. What counts in the struggle are the organized workers who, with varying degrees of commitment, are involved in it. From the membership base, to those who attend assemblies and meetings, to those who are consistently active in union life, to workers who take more or less determined sides during the strike.

Of course, you vote in workers' assemblies. But it is done by open voting, not "in private," in the secrecy of the ballot box. Those who do not engage and those who don't give a damn about the union struggle already, and do not attend the assemblies and meetings are thus excluded from decision making. Taking a public stand in front of one's fellow workers motivates one another.

Evidently, this is not about obsequious compliance with an abstract, democratic principle of justice, which when dropped into the real world of capitalism turns into a formidable weapon for perpetuating the injustice of the privileged class to the detriment of workers. It is about positing as the sovereign principle the interests of the exploited class, and thus its strength and struggle.

That the pro-bourgeois leaders of the CGIL promote referendums, in order to continue their undying work of miseducating the workers and to cover with this diversion their willingness not to organize any struggle, is as obvious and logical as ever. We are interested in criticizing those trade union currents that want to be "class-based," and therefore against collaborationist trade unionism, but respond to the maneuvers of the CGIL leadership in an inadequate way, and this because of the original vice of subservience to democratic, that is, bourgeois, ideology.

For the spokeswoman of the alternative area in CGIL, Le Radici del Sindacato (roughly translated: The Roots of the Trade Union), "It is necessary to know that neither one nor two nor four referendums will suffice, but they are certainly a step to open a reflection and, I hope, a mobilization" ("Progetto lavoro", May '24). The referendum itself, then, is not denounced as a tool peculiar to collaborationist, anti-struggle unionism. The referendum campaign of the CGIL leadership would be a "step" in the direction of "reflection" and – hopefully [!] – mobilization, not the worn-out diversionary method against the struggle of the CGIL leadership!

CUB's national leadership (an italian conflictual trade union born in 1992) follows a similar score in its May 21 communiqué: "It is not enough to vote and win the referendum, which represents a piece of a more general battle that CUB has been waging all along. It is necessary to continue the mobilizations" ("Referendum CGIL"). Only the national leader of CUB SUR (School, University, Research) and the secretary of the Milan Cub, at least as far as we are aware, has taken the correct position in this grassroots union, noting the miseducting nature of the referendum instrument.

Voting is not an effective tool of struggle, and even worse if in collaboration with the bosses: this is the lesson that those who support class unionism must give workers.

Kenya: The Current and Ongoing Anti-government Protests

A specter is haunting Kenya. The government of President William Ruto – a staunch puppet of the IMF and World Bank – is attempting to force punitive taxes onto the masses. Youth protests have erupted in every central town and city, signaling a radical undercurrent. Kenyan workers are now demanding a general strike.

President Ruto called in the army after millions engulfed the streets against his severe austerity measures. In a previous televised address, he labeled the protesters as "treasonous" and "dangerous criminals," vowing to treat every threat as an existential danger to the republic.

In the early hours of Wednesday, June 26th, anti-Finance Bill protestors surrounded the parliament building in Nairobi, attempting to paralyze the economy and force Ruto to abandon his plans to extract over $2 billion in new taxes from workers and rural poor, a puppet for the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The bill follows a period of economic instability where Kenya teetered on the brink of default – another in a long line of poor and "emerging" economies on the edge of a financial abyss. A $1.5 billion bond sale in February temporarily saved the government, allowing it to pay off another maturing bond.

Kenya's situation has become so dire that new debt is being rolled on to pay old debt at ever-increasing interest rates. 30% of the government's budget is spent on debt servicing. Enter the IMF and World Bank, with their "aid" in the form of loans, ostensibly to help Kenya repay its parasitic creditors – the catch: these debts are to be repaid by propping up ordinary Kenyans as blood bags.

Following the IMF's dictates, the parliament has proposed the Finance Bill 2024, a package of brutal austerity measures that triggered the protests. This bill aims to raise $2.7 billion in additional taxes to reduce the budget deficit and state borrowing, as Kenya's public debt stands at 68% of GDP. Facing economic challenges and uncertainty about accessing capital markets, Kenya turned to the IMF, which demanded that the government meet revenue targets to secure more funding. The bill includes new levies on essential commodities like bread, vegetable oil, and sugar. Most infuriatingly, it introduces the villainously named "eco-taxes," including an "eco-levy" on sanitary diapers and menstrual pads, sparking outrage among young Kenyan women. Additionally, it proposes higher taxes on financial transactions.

Faced with these new taxes that further strain their already stretched finances, Kenyan workers have taken to the streets. Social media quickly became a platform for them to share their plight. Without a central leader or a dominant revolutionary party, young people across the country have risen on pure instinct – praxis without theory but naturally spontaneous. The government responded with threats of police violence, internet shutdowns, and the arrests of hundreds over the past weeks, attempting to crush the movement. Ruto and his goons have abducted several bloggers, activists, and social media influencers, hoping to intimidate the largely youthful protesters, with little success.

What began as small protests in Nairobi last Tuesday escalated into a nationwide movement by Thursday, as demonstrations spread to major cities and towns following the second reading of the Finance Bill. The day ended tragically with the police killing a 29-year-old protester, fueling calls for a national shutdown on Wednesday. People now call for a general strike, alongside planned demonstrations and potential spontaneous actions.

Initially, the government responded with repression, deploying water cannons, tear gas, and arresting hundreds of people. However, these tactics failed to suppress the masses. Protest numbers grew throughout the evening despite the violence. Videos circulated showing defiant prisoners singing in their cells. Many slogans expressed the deep-seated hatred for the ruling elite. Placards read, "Ruto is a thief!" "Ruto must go!" "Wake up, we are being robbed!" The masses are acutely aware that Kenya is pivotal to U.S. imperialism's strategic interests in East Africa and that their leaders are merely puppets of imperialism and the agents of capital.

Most Kenyans are incredibly young, and this youthful energy is the driving force behind the protests. While this generation may not have direct memories of the IMF-imposed austerity of the 1980s and '90s, there's a palpable feeling that they will not allow history to repeat itself.

The IMF, a dragon hoarding its blood treasure – calling international capital to rush in once it has picked a new victim. This story is all too familiar. Some readers might remember the fate of Yugoslavia after the passing of our dear General Secretary Tito.

Initially, many arrogant MPs dismissed the protests, earning themselves the moniker "MPigs." One MP even claimed that the images of demonstrations circulating on social media were merely Photoshop creations.

As panic set in, the government attempted to make concessions, introducing a series of amendments. They dropped taxes on bread and vegetable oil and assured the public that "eco-taxes" would only apply to finished imports. As the nation produces many of these items domestically, this ruling is silly. But this was too little, too late. The millions, having tasted their power, are now more confident than ever. Both repression and concessions only served to fuel the movement further.

The government's tactics were futile against the youthful protestors. Kenyan politicians had assumed the youth were apathetic and unlikely to mobilize. In the 2022 elections that brought Ruto to power, less than 40% of registered voters were youth, despite the median age in Kenya being below 20 and 65% of the population under 35.

These vibrant actions by the Kenyan youth and working class, though perhaps lacking the revolutionary education of past generations, echo the spirit of Lenin in Differences in the European Labour Movement:

«But, needless to say, the masses learn from life and not from books, and therefore certain individuals or groups constantly exaggerate, elevate to a one-sided theory, to a one-sided system of tactics, now one and now another feature of capitalist development, now one and now another 'lesson' of this development».

This "interaction between all classes" manifests as the Kenyan working class turns against a modern-day Goliath. However, the conscious workers will always have a hill to fight against. Marx stated in the German Ideology:

«The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently, also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it… for instance, during the time the aristocracy was dominant, the concepts honor, loyalty, etc., were dominant, During the dominance of the bourgeoisie the concepts of freedom, equality, etc.»

The ruling class made a fatal mistake, confusing detachment for apathy. With unemployment reaching as high as 35% for those aged 18-35, many young Kenyans have little hope for the future. The message from the Kenyan protesters is clear: with little to lose, they realize they have the world to win.

Last year, Odinga, an influential Kenyan oligarch, called off mass opposition to Ruto over the Finance Bill for the year prior, 2023, when the movement threatened to intersect with calls for strike action by civil servants. Odinga belongs to the wealthiest 0.1% of the Kenyan population, who owns more wealth than the bottom 99.9% (more than 48 million Kenyans). The government claims the new tax measures are necessary to fund development programs and reduce public debt. However, across the country, hundreds of thousands of teachers and healthcare workers, who have repeatedly struck over the past five years against low wages and precarious job contracts, vehemently disagree.

The Party previously discussed the 2012 Kenyan healthcare workers'

strikes in il Partito Comunista, n. 352 (translated from Italian): «The general struggle called by the Kenya Health Professionals Society union [had] workers of the Moi Teaching Hospital immediately go down into a fight, and march along the streets of the city protesting against the poor working conditions and for the enforcement of the agreement. Every time, all the workers in the other city hospitals fraternize and continue the fight. The strike extends to the province on the coast and again to the whole country, outside of union control. The workers, mostly women, denounce the betrayal of the trade union management. These direct statements of theirs: “We have not been consulted and no questions have been put on the table: they have only been able to make promises. We don’t go back without the security of eating at the table. We don’t even believe that the deal actually is there; the negotiations have not earned us anything and we feel deceived. For this, we will continue with the strike until all our requests are met. We no longer want promises; we want immediate and tangible results”».

In the port of Mombasa, six thousand workers could halt Ruto’s overarching privatization plans, bringing the region to a standstill. Thousands of aviation workers, including those at Kenya Airways, could block Kenya’s airspace. Millions of tea, coffee, and other agricultural workers in rural areas could paralyze the countryside in a country where 60% of revenue comes from the agriculture sector.

Despite the ongoing movement, trade unions are becoming the foremost restraining hand for workers joining the anti-austerity protests with their demands. The unions refuse to mobilize the tens of thousands employed in manufacturing, food processing, chemical production, plastics, and metal works in Nairobi’s industrial area. The Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), which consists of 36 trade unions and represents more than 1.5 million workers, has a sordid history of suppressing strikes and protests, including that by 4,000 doctors earlier this year.

Similarly, Francis Atwoli, the secretary general of the COTU, has defended the Finance Bill, stating that “people are being taxed everywhere and, indeed, if we pay tax and the money is used properly we will evade the issue of borrowing money.”

The “Let them eat cake!” attitude from the supposed labor representatives of the government couldn’t be more on the nose.

President Ruto is preparing to impose more police state measures, such as the Assembly and Demonstration Bill, 2024, restricting where protests can occur and imposing draconian fines for “violations” of up to $770, equivalent to half a year’s average wage.

However, following last week’s demonstrations, the government softened its position, with Ruto endorsing recommendations to scrap some new levies, including car ownership, bread, and the eco-levy on locally manufactured goods. The finance ministry has said such concessions would blow a 200 billion Kenyan shilling ($1.56 billion) hole in the 2024/25 budget and necessitate spending cuts.

Protesters and opposition parties have said the concessions are insufficient and want the bill abandoned. With the recent national uproar, as graciously as they gunned down workers, the bourgeois government is now beginning to listen.

«Having reflected on the continuing conversation regarding the content of the Finance Bill 2024 and listening keenly to the people of Kenya who have thundered that they want nothing to do with this Finance Bill 2024, I concede, and therefore, I will not sign the 2024 Finance Bill,” President Ruto said during a television address Wednesday. “The people have spoken,” Ruto said. “Following the passage of the bill, the country experienced widespread expression of dissatisfaction with the bill as passed, regrettably resulting in the loss of life, the destruction of property, and desecration of constitutional institutions».

This rollback comes after Ruto championed the controversial tax reforms in the face of public opposition. However, Rotu seems to have forgotten, or at least not acknowledged, that this comes after mass protests turned violent the day earlier, leaving 23 people dead.

Now, the eyes of the world are on Kenya, where the struggle between the working class and the ruling elite unfolds in real time. As revolutionary fervor grows, Kenyan workers, particularly the youth, stand at a critical juncture. The message from the streets is clear: with nothing left to lose, they are prepared to fight for a future free from the chains of austerity and debt.

The battle for Kenya’s future is far from over, and as history unfolds, the courage and determination of its workers will undoubtedly inspire proletarian movements across the globe. The specter haunting Kenya is a clarion call to the international working class: the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains; they have a world to win.

Kenya - Here and now

Kenya today represents one of the most advanced in capitalist development in Africa. Following the global financial crisis 2008, which saw Kenya’s GDP growth drop to 1.6%, the country has since experienced a robust economic recovery, averaging an annual GDP growth rate of 5.4% from 2015 to 2023. Inflation, which soared to 14% in 2011, has stabilized in recent years, averaging around 6% in 2023. Both domestic and international factors drive this stability.

Kenya’s export economy is focused on agricultural output. In 2023, the main export items included tea (19%), agricultural products (18%), manufactured goods (16%), and coffee (5%). The value of tea exports, a traditional mainstay, continues to grow, though at a more moderate pace of 12% annually. Additionally, the rise in flowers and fresh produce exports has bolstered the agricultural sector, contributing to Kenya’s economic resilience and development.

The Kenyan government’s focus on infrastructure development, technology, and renewable energy has also driven economic growth. Investments in the Standard Gauge Railway and the expansion of the port of Mombasa have improved logistics and trade efficiency. At the same time, the burgeoning tech hub in Nairobi, dubbed ‘Silicon Savannah,’ has positioned Kenya as a leader in digital innovation in Africa.

Chinese development initiatives, particularly under the Belt and Road Initiative, have profoundly impacted Kenya’s infrastructure. Significant projects include the construction of the Standard Gauge Railway, which connects Nairobi to the port city of Mombasa, significantly enhancing trade efficiency. Additionally, Chinese firms are developing critical road networks and energy projects, providing much-needed capital and expertise to propel Kenya’s infrastructural advancements.

The United States has also been a crucial partner in Kenya’s development. The U.S. has contributed to various sectors, including healthcare, education, and energy, through programs such as the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Power Africa initiative. American investment has been pivotal in promoting renewable energy projects, particularly geothermal and wind power, aligning with Kenya’s goal of achieving universal energy access by 2030.

Domestically, Kenya has seen the rise of a robust class of local capitalists driving economic growth. Prominent Kenyan entrepreneurs and businesses, particularly in the banking, telecommunications, and agriculture sectors, have significantly contributed to the country’s development. Companies like Safaricom, Equity Bank, and KCB Group are significant employers and pivotal players in enhancing financial inclusion and technological innovation. These domestic capitalists have been instrumental in shaping Kenya’s economic trajectory, fostering a private sector that complements foreign investments and drives the ~5% economic growth yearly.

However, the Kenyan proletariat does not share in the dividends of capital. Instead, they face a reduction in the purchasing power of wages due to the rising prices of necessities. Between 2020 and 2022, actual earnings saw a steady decline, averaging a decrease of 2.7%. This trend has persisted as inflation rates surged in 2022, with average inflation reaching 8.7% between June 2022 and June 2023, peaking at 9.6% in October 2022 – the highest level since 2017. A staggering 77% of workers earn below the minimum wage, with median earners spending 60% of their income on food alone.

Workers are forced to engage in a tight struggle for economic survival, gaining valuable experience in the anti-capitalist struggle. This struggle, which starts locally and within specific sectors, must evolve into a united front for the working class.

The current wave of protests and strikes is a testament to the growing class consciousness among Kenyan workers. They are rising against the oppressive policies of austerity and exploitation imposed by local and international capitalists. This movement is not just about opposing specific policies but broad issues: international movements are moving ever closer to challenging the foundations of a system that prioritizes profit over people.

Do not trust them!

This capitalist government, like all its predecessors and all its offspring, shamelessly ignores the interests of the working class, instead thrusting the burdens of capitalism back onto them. It steals their labor and then blames them for the system’s inevitable failures. The colossal weight of national and international capital rests on workers’ shoulders, which will not change, no matter who is in power. Short-term economic shifts are reactions to investor confidence in how well the administration serves the capitalist elite.

The relentless crisis of capitalism fuels continuous assaults on the working class, which will persist regardless of hollow government promises or party affiliations. Members of Parliament are nothing more than guardians of capitalist interests, enriching themselves as long as they don’t tarnish the system’s facade too blatantly. Meanwhile, the exploitation of the working class – the vast majority of society – remains unchallenged.

The working class knows this truth but has yet to take decisive action to seize power. Workers build and rebuild the world daily, wielding immense power that holds the potential to envision and create a world free from exploitation, poverty, economic crises, and wars. However, achieving this vision demands the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a communist society, where contributions are based on ability and needs are met accordingly. Communism will eradicate the rampant overproduction, waste, and ecological devastation caused by capitalism, replacing them with rational production that genuinely serves humanity without the empty rhetoric of “green” sustainability.

Communism will end poverty and war, but this cannot be achieved through voting for any party, especially those masquerading as communist or socialist. Actual change will only come when the working class, led by the International Communist Party, seizes power.

Venezuela: The bourgeoisie has its president

Winners and losers both represent the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism!

Voting in presidential elections was not and will not be the way out of the capitalist crisis!

The working class struggles for its interests regardless of national, regional and parliamentary elections

The new government will give continuity to anti-worker policies!

Background

As in many countries in today's capitalist world, albeit with its specificities, in Venezuela the bourgeoisie and its regime respect electoral processes for the election of presidents, governors, mayors and deputies. In Venezuela, indefinite reelection is allowed. It is also possible by referendum to remove the national president from office mid-term. The 1999 Constitution established the "coexistence" of five powers, one of which is the Electoral Power, represented by the National Electoral Council (CNE).

In the 1990s, the two-party model, through which the bourgeoisie had resolved political control of the masses, entered a crisis. Traditional parties, in a context of economic and social crisis, had lost their ability to stifle the discontent of the masses and keep them subservient to capital. In this context, Chavismo emerged as a bourgeois movement with a populist and "leftist" discourse that succeeded in solving the problem of governability, displacing the old parties and winning their social and electoral base. With widespread popularity, Chavismo became the ideal administrator of the interests of the bourgeoisie, strengthening and expanding capitalist profits, increasing the rate of exploitation of workers, destroying and controlling the various mass organizations, especially trade unions, ensuring the social peace demanded by national and multinational corporations, mainly linked to oil revenues.

The program of Chavismo, which proclaimed itself "socialist" and gained the support of various movements and parties of the opportunist left, both parliamentary and "guerrilla," were fully capitalist, like that of its opponents, with a high dose of populism and the traditional phenomenon of corruption. While proclaiming itself "socialist," Chavismo proposed from the beginning the defense of private property and the market, the fight against latifundia (read growth of agro-industrial capitalism in the countryside), accompanied by the demagogic offer of the "democratization of capital" (read redistribution of monopoly control of the means of production), the defense of the national economy (i.e., support for local, non-monopoly entrepreneurs in the face of the penetration of transnational capital).

It promoted a scheme similar to the "New Deal" with which Roosevelt dealt with the Great Depression in the United States, relying, among other strategies, on so-called "Missions" and "Great Missions," centered on using oil revenues to stimulate demand for goods.

Chavismo claimed to move in a "multipolar" world, on the basis of which it formed alliances with China, Russia, Cuba, countries of the Arab world, etc., while being in the "backyard" of the United States. It has also joined the São Paulo Forum, an organization in which the international opportunist left converges, and has promoted the weakening of North American influence in Central and South America, fostering the sharpening of inter-imperialist contradictions on the continent.

The political model promoted by Chavismo has paved the way for multiple electoral appointments under the so-called "protagonist and participatory democracy," which, more than in the past, has alienated workers from the class struggle and made the working class raise the reactionary banners of homeland, sovereignty and defense of the national economy, waved demagogically, given the huge commitments to multinational corporations. In this context, Chavismo won the majority of presidential, parliamentary and regional elections for about 20 years.

However, since 2012, when Hugo Chávez won the presidential election by a small margin only to die of cancer, Chavismo has begun to wear down and in each electoral process has won with increasing difficulty, despite the extensive use of the resources of state institutions and the intervention of both other pro-government parties and various tame opposition parties.

By 2024 Chavismo was widely rejected by the population, including its own social base. Although none of the opposition candidates succeeded in capturing the sympathies of the masses, discontent eventually funneled to the candidate who had the most economic and propagandist support, creating expectations of a change in government.

Throughout this period, workers were distanced from the class struggle and their real demands through the drugs of electoralism, legalism and parliamentarianism. This was also joined by sectors of the Stalinist and Trotskyist left, which always defended the electoral institution and promoted a plan of nationalist reforms that a so-called "workers' government," capitalist like all others, was supposed to implement.

The electoral system has been automated and provides for multiple stages of verification, touted as sheltered from attempts at fraud. Both the parties supporting the government and those supporting opposition candidates agree on this.

With the highest oil and gas reserves, after a process of declining production, Venezuela ranks sixth among U.S. oil suppliers in 2024, and it is predictable that the struggle for government in Venezuela will be associated with strategies for control of this energy commodity, the subject of inter-imperialist clashes. Electoral and nonelectoral contentions between local political and business groups are part of the inter-imperialist clashes, which see Venezuela, its natural wealth and geographic location as factors to be used to their advantage.

Venezuela is not experiencing a confrontation between capitalism and socialism, as the media and social networks want to present it, but a confrontation between capitalists, in the face of which the working class must maintain its independence, with its own program and historical north.

With the sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Venezuela, a model of high profitability has been established for both multinational corporations and mafias associated with the local government, as Venezuelan oil is sold cheaply on the black market, opening up space for various businesses that funnel capital into corruption networks and increase the profits of international consortiums.

This Year’s Elections with the Different Bourgeois Factions in Struggle

Elections for a new president were held on July 28. In the early hours of the 29th the CNE announced the prevailing presidential re-election of Nicolás Maduro, who will govern until 2031. But on the same day the CNE declared that it had not counted all the votes and had not submitted the minutes of every polling station. The main opposition candidate denounced fraud and did not acknowledge the results, sparking street protests, some spontaneous, some linked to underclass thuggery paid for by some parties.

Internationally, many governments have questioned the election result, which has become a terrain for inter-imperialist confrontation. On Aug. 2, the CNE published its second bulletin, with 96.87 percent of votes registered, confirming Maduro's victory, but it did not present results of polling stations or endorsement of ballots.

Maduro, that is, the parties, mafias and multinational corporations that support him, will continue to administer the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialist groups and will continue to press for the super-exploitation of the wage-earners.

In a sense, Maduro's victory expresses the prevalence of interests, primarily U.S. interests, although this seems to contradict announcements of U.S. sanctions. But the other nine candidates, had they won, would also have represented the same interests.

Moreover, if movements and parties such as the Stalinists of the Venezuelan "Communist" party and the Trotskyists had been allowed to present a "workers' candidate" or a "truly Chavista candidate," they would still have embraced the bourgeois program and protected the business of big business.

Democracy is the bourgeoisie's form of government, which allows the exploited to elect the representatives of the exploiters in public institutions, based on the illusion that the state, which remains bourgeois, and the laws, which are also bourgeois, represent everyone equally. The proletariat has the task, the necessity, the duty, the challenge to break with these illusions and manipulations of the various politicians that lead it to hope that its situation will change and improve by electing new presidents, governors or parliamentarians. Never through voting will the proletariat find a way out of capitalist exploitation.

Chavismo's continued control of the government implies the use of repression that is increasingly evident. It is to be expected that the loss of its social base will continue to advance and that this will be reflected in the upcoming regional and parliamentary elections.

What matters is that the proletariat, through its defensive trade union organizations, manages to break with electoralism, assume its class independence and advance in the unity of action of its claimed struggles.

The Venezuelan government will have to deal with the international climate, with a group of states contesting the election results. Sooner or later, however, Europe and the United States will eventually recognize its legitimacy, because there are many business and geopolitical alignments at stake. The allegations of fraud will remain as such, soon dissolving to avoid interference in the oil and gas business of U.S. and European companies, such as Chevron, Eni and Repsol, but also of China and the BRICS countries, which already have Chavismo support in the Venezuelan government. The "international isolation" will not go so far as to paralyze business and will leave room for multiple negotiations, more secret than public, as no multinational will want to be without some of the oil, gas and other riches available in Venezuela.

The U.S., which sees Venezuela as part of its strategy to control the oil market, knows that it must graduate its pressure on the Venezuelan government, since the latter's relations with the BRICS group would be strengthened and provide a counterweight to its imperialist claims. On the other hand, a surrender of the Chavistas with handing over the government to the opposition does not seem possible, as it would clash with the interests of the adverse imperialist bloc led by China.

The governments of Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and that of the United States conducting negotiations with the Venezuelan government, have expressed approval for these efforts, which confirms a willingness to reach a conciliatory agreement that does not disrupt business.

Allegations of Electoral Fraud Brought Inter-Bourgeois Confrontation to the Streets

After the elections, pro-government and opposition parties insisted on distancing workers from the struggles for their demands, leading to a clash between those who supported Maduro and those who denounced electoral fraud that would have prevented the opposition candidate's victory. The working class must not allow itself to be manipulated in this way. The only struggle that interests it is the class struggle, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Workers must unite, organize and fight independently for their economic and social demands.

While international organizations and opposition parties demanded verification of the election results, the government immediately activated the repression of demonstrations, using both military and police forces and so-called "colectivos," composed of underclassmen and thugs, raising the banner of fighting terrorism and fascism. The statistics of dead, wounded and detained emerged immediately.

The next step was the persecution and arrest of opposition party leaders, accused of paying criminals to provoke violence in the streets. In fact, both bourgeois fronts recruited among criminals to pilot these clashes.

The government, in addition to "anti-terrorist" actions, defended the election results. Maduro appealed to the Electoral Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice to verify the votes in the face of prolonged silence from the CNE, street mobilizations called by the opposition, and pressure from international organizations and governments.

A week after the elections neither the opposition presented evidence of fraud nor the CNE of Maduro's victory. There has only been in the social networks the "virtual" clash between the government's opinion and that of the oppositions, which, with foreign support, allegedly promoted a coup d'état and terror, foiled by the government. And in this media brawl any possibility of independent political response by the working class was prevented.

"No to fraud, respect for the will of the people expressed in the vote," this was the slogan of Trotskyist opportunism, which made clear its commitment to bourgeois democracy and interclassism. The Stalinist "Communist" Party of Venezuela called for "the establishment of a popular-democratic front for the defense of the constitution and sovereignty." The opportunists, who claim to present themselves as a left opposed to the right, actually converge with all agents of the bourgeoisie to promote the defense of democracy, parliamentarism and the constitution. The cries against rigging and in defense of the right to vote allow the bourgeoisie to draw workers away from the struggles for their demands, the class struggle and the anti-capitalist revolutionary path.

Meanwhile, the government has announced the construction of two prisons where those arrested during the protests and those associated with "terrorist plans" will be locked up. Military and police actions have already brought more than 2,000 detainees there. Chavismo spokesmen have denounced that the right-wing's destabilizing plans include strikes and work stoppages, thus laying the groundwork for repressing workers' struggles by presenting them as part of terrorist plans. All this repressive apparatus, used today against the masses dragged by bourgeois factions, is actually ready to confront the proletariat with the violence of the bourgeois state when wage earners regain their class independence and unite in mobilization and strike against capitalist exploitation.

Nothing new under the sun

The new government will keep wage earners burdened with low wages, unemployment and poor health and public service conditions. The government, pro-government and opposition parties and union cliques will continue in their false propaganda to prevent workers from understanding the causes of the economic and social crisis and the class and geopolitical interests at stake.

The various cliques of trade unionists have invited people to vote for different presidential candidates, pro-government or pro-opposition. With this action, the union leaderships once again showed their role as supporters of the capitalist regime and allies of the bosses.

The only way out of the crisis will emerge from the workers' mobilization and strike, freed from electoralism and parliamentarianism.

The new president will lead a government that will continue to administer the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism, which will assume the defense of the national economy. The vaunted economic recovery will only be possible on the basis of low wages, long working hours, unsafe working conditions, and curtailed health care and public services. The new government will continue to shift the burden of the crisis onto the workers, and announcements of economic growth will be accompanied by hunger, misery and unemployment for the majority.

Considering that right now a family of five needs at least the equivalent of $1,200 a month to access all basic goods and services, workers must unite and resume the strike, without notice, without minimum services and indefinitely, with demands for a significant increase in wages and pensions and safe workplace conditions and environments.

This will require workers to move beyond the treacherous union, confederation and federation directions that keep them divided and demobilized. It is necessary for real class unions to emerge in the thick of the struggle. On this road it is important to promote assemblies, grassroots organizing, in companies and workplaces. But above all, workers must organize locally, integrating active, retired and unemployed workers outside the companies and forming a regional and national network. All of these grassroots organizations must come together in a Unified Class Union Front, in which workers unite regardless of which union they are affiliated with and regardless of their political or party preference, nationality or occupation.

While opportunist parties and trade unionists call on workers to unite in defense of the homeland and the national economy, this Single Trade Union Front must promote unity for winning higher wages and pensions and for paying full wages to the unemployed. While opportunists and trade unionists promote unity between the exploited and the exploiters, this Trade Union Single Front must promote the unity of the working class against its domestic or foreign, public or private, national or multinational exploiters.

All these tragedies suffered by wage-workers and the oppressed masses, resulting from capitalist exploitation, can only be overcome by the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a communist society. Only communism will end the regime of insane overproduction, waste and perpetual threats to the planet's ecology.

But this can never be achieved through the methods of democracy, voting and parliamentarianism. It can only be achieved through the seizure of power by the only force that can transform society: the working class, led by the International Communist Party. The seizure of political power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the political goal to be pursued by the workers' movement worldwide in opposition to bourgeois democracy. All immediate claim struggles must converge in this political direction..

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Third (Communist) International

1st Congres – 4 March 1919

Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

1. Faced with the growth of the revolutionary workers' movement in every country, the bourgeoisie and their agents in the workers' organizations are making desperate attempts to find ideological and political arguments in defence of the rule of the exploiters. Condemnation of dictatorship and defence of democracy are particularly prominent among these arguments. The falsity and hypocrisy of this argument, repeated in a thousand strains by the capitalist press and at the Berne yellow International Conference in February 1919, are obvious to all who refuse to betray the fundamental principles of socialism.

2. Firstly, this argument employs the concepts of 'democracy in general' and 'dictatorship in general', without posing the question of the class concerned. This non-class or above-class presentation, which supposedly is popular, is an outright travesty of the basic tenet of socialism, namely, its theory of class struggle, which socialists who have sided with the bourgeoisie recognize in words but disregard in practice. For in no civilized capitalist country does 'democracy in general' exist; all that exists is bourgeois democracy, and it is not a question of 'dictatorship in general', but of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, i.e., the proletariat, over its oppressors and exploiters, i.e., the bourgeoisie, in order to overcome the resistance offered by the exploiters in their fight to maintain their domination.

3. History teaches us that no oppressed class ever did, or could, achieve power without going through a period of dictatorship, i.e., the conquest of political power and forcible suppression of the resistance always offered by the exploiters – a resistance that is most desperate, most furious, and that stops at nothing. The bourgeoisie, whose domination is now defended by the socialists who denounce 'dictatorship in general' and extol 'democracy in general', won power in the advanced countries through a series of insurrections, civil wars, and the forcible suppression of kings, feudal lords, slaveowners and their attempts at restoration. In books, pamphlets, congress resolutions and propaganda speeches socialists everywhere have thousands and millions of times explained to the people the class nature of these bourgeois revolutions and this bourgeois dictatorship. That is why the present defence of bourgeois democracy under cover of talk about 'democracy in general' and the present howls and shouts against proletarian dictatorship under cover of shouts about 'dictatorship in general' are an outright betrayal of socialism. They are, in fact, desertion to the bourgeoisie, denial of the proletariat's right to its own, proletarian, revolution, and defence of bourgeois reformism at the very historical juncture when bourgeois reformism throughout the world has collapsed and the war has created a revolutionary situation.

4. In explaining the class nature of bourgeois civilisation, bourgeois democracy and the bourgeois parliamentary system, all socialists have expressed the idea formulated with the greatest scientific precision by Marx and Engels, namely, that the most democratic bourgeois republic is no more than a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie, for the suppression of the working people by a handful of capitalists. There is not a single revolutionary, not a single Marxist among those now shouting against dictatorship and for democracy who has not sworn and vowed to the workers that he accepts this basic truth of socialism. But now, when the revolutionary proletariat is in a fighting mood and taking action to destroy this machine of oppression and to establish proletarian dictatorship, these traitors to socialism claim that the bourgeoisie have granted the working people 'pure democracy', have abandoned resistance and are prepared to yield to the majority of the working people. They assert that in a democratic republic there is not, and never has been, any such thing as a state machine for the oppression of labour by capital.

5. The Paris Commune – to which all who parade as socialists pay lip service, for they know that the workers ardently and sincerely sympathize with the Commune – showed very clearly the historically conventional nature and limited value of the bourgeois parliamentary system and bourgeois democracy – institutions which, though highly progressive compared with medieval times, inevitably require a radical alteration in the era of proletarian revolution. It was Marx who best appraised the historical significance of the Commune. In his analysis, he revealed the exploiting nature of bourgeois democracy and the bourgeois parliamentary system under which the oppressed classes enjoy the right to decide once in several years which representative of the propertied classes shall 'represent and suppress' (ver- und zertreten) the people in parliament. And it is now, when the Soviet movement is embracing the entire world and continuing the work of the Commune for all to see, that the traitors to socialism are forgetting the concrete experience and concrete lessons of the Paris Commune and repeating the old bourgeois rubbish about 'democracy in general'. The Commune was not a parliamentary institution.

6. The significance of the Commune, furthermore, lies in the fact that it endeavoured to crush, to smash to its very foundations, the bourgeois state apparatus, the bureaucratic, judicial, military and police machine, and to replace it by a self-governing, mass workers' organization in which there was no division between legislative and executive power. All contemporary bourgeois democratic republics, including the German republic, which the traitors to socialism, in mockery of the truth, describe as a proletarian republic, retain this state apparatus. We therefore again get quite clear confirmation of the point that shouting in defence of 'democracy in general' is actually defence of the bourgeoisie and their privileges as exploiters.

7. 'Freedom of assembly' can be taken as a sample of the requisites of 'pure democracy'. Every class-conscious worker who has not broken with his class will readily appreciate the absurdity of promising freedom of assembly to the exploiters at a time and in a situation when the exploiters are resisting the overthrow of their rule and are fighting to retain their privileges. When the bourgeoisie were revolutionary, they did not, either in England in 1649 or in France in 1793, grant 'freedom of assembly' to the monarchists and nobles, who summoned foreign troops and 'assembled' to organize attempts at restoration. If the present-day bourgeoisie, who have long since become reactionary, demand from the proletariat advance guarantees of 'freedom of assembly' for the exploiters, whatever the resistance offered by the capitalists to being expropriated, the workers will only laugh at that hypocrisy.

The workers know perfectly well, too, that even in the most democratic bourgeois republic 'freedom of assembly' is a hollow phrase, for the rich have the best public and private buildings at their disposal, and enough leisure to assemble at meetings, which are protected by the bourgeois machine of power. The rural and urban workers and the small peasants – the overwhelming majority of the population – are denied all these things. As long as that state of affairs prevails, 'equality', i.e., 'pure democracy', is a fraud. The first thing to do to win genuine equality and enable the working people to enjoy democracy in practice is to deprive the exploiters of all the public and sumptuous private buildings, to give the working people leisure and to see to it that their freedom of assembly is protected by armed workers, not by scions of the nobility or capitalist officers in command of downtrodden soldiers.

Only when that change is effected can we speak of freedom of assembly and of equality without mocking at the workers, at working people in general, at the poor. And this change can be effected only by the vanguard of the working people, the proletariat, which overthrows the exploiters, the bourgeoisie.

8. 'Freedom of the press' is another of the principal slogans of 'pure democracy'. And here, too, the workers know – and socialists everywhere have admitted it millions of times – that this freedom is a deception while the printing-presses and the biggest stocks of paper are appropriated by the capitalists, and while capitalist rule over the press remains, a rule that is manifested throughout the world all the more strikingly, sharply and cynically the more democracy and the republican system are developed, as in America for example. The first thing to do to win real equality and genuine democracy for the working people, for the workers and peasants, is to deprive capital of the possibility of hiring writers, buying up publishing houses and bribing newspapers. And to do that the capitalists and exploiters have to be overthrown and their resistance suppressed. The capitalists have always used the term 'freedom' to mean freedom for the rich to get richer and for the workers to starve to death. In capitalist usage, freedom of the press means freedom of the rich to bribe the press, freedom to use their wealth to shape and fabricate so-called public opinion. In this respect, too, the defenders of 'pure democracy' prove to be defenders of an utterly foul and venal system that gives the rich control over the mass media. They prove to be deceivers of the people, who, with the aid of plausible, fine-sounding, but thoroughly false phrases, divert them from the concrete historical task of liberating the press from capitalist enslavement. Genuine freedom and equality will be embodied in the system which the Communists are building, and in which there will be no opportunity for amassing wealth at the expense of others, no objective opportunities for putting the press under the direct or indirect power of money, and no impediments in the way of any workingman (or groups of workingmen, in any numbers) for enjoying and practising equal rights in the use of public printing-presses and public stocks of paper.

9. The history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrated, even before the war, what this celebrated 'pure democracy' really is under capitalism. Marxists have always maintained that the more developed, the 'purer' democracy is, the more naked, acute and merciless the class struggle becomes, and the 'purer' the capitalist oppression and bourgeois dictatorship. The Dreyfus case in republican France, the massacre of strikers by hired bands armed by the capitalists in the free and democratic American republic – these and thousands of similar facts illustrate the truth which the bourgeoisie are vainly seeking to conceal, namely, that actually terror and bourgeois dictatorship prevail in the most democratic of republics and are openly displayed every time the exploiters think the power of capital is being shaken.

10. The imperialist war of 1914-18 conclusively revealed even to backward workers the true nature of bourgeois democracy, even in the freest republics, as being a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Tens of millions were killed for the sake of enriching the German or the British group of millionaires and multimillionaires, and bourgeois military dictatorships were established in the freest republics. This military dictatorship continues to exist in the Allied countries even after Germany's defeat. It was mostly the war that opened the eyes of the working people, that stripped bourgeois democracy of its camouflage and showed the people the abyss of speculation and profiteering that existed during and because of the war. It was in the name of 'freedom and equality' that the bourgeoisie waged the war, and in the name of 'freedom and equality' that the munition manufacturers piled up fabulous fortunes. Nothing that the yellow Berne International does can conceal from the people the now thoroughly exposed exploiting character of bourgeois freedom, bourgeois equality and bourgeois democracy.

11. In Germany, the most developed capitalist country of continental Europe, the very first months of full republican freedom, established as a result of imperialist Germany's defeat, have shown the German workers and the whole world the true class substance of the bourgeois-democratic republic. The murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg is an event of epoch-making significance not only because of the tragic death of these finest people and leaders of the truly proletarian, Communist International, but also because the class nature of an advanced European state – it can be said without exaggeration, of an advanced state on a world-wide scale – has been conclusively exposed. If those arrested, i.e., those placed under state protection, could be assassinated by officers and capitalists with impunity, and this under a government headed by social-patriots, then the democratic republic where such a thing was possible is a bourgeois dictatorship. Those who voice their indignation at the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg but fail to understand this fact are only demonstrating their stupidity, or hypocrisy. 'Freedom' in the German republic, one of the freest and advanced republics of the world, is freedom to murder arrested leaders of the proletariat with impunity. Nor can it be otherwise as long as capitalism remains, for the development of democracy sharpens rather than dampens the class struggle which, by virtue of all the results and influences of the war and of its consequences, has been brought to boiling point.

Throughout the civilized world we see Bolsheviks being exiled, persecuted and thrown into prison. This is the case, for example, in Switzerland, one of the freest bourgeois republics, and in America, where there have been anti-Bolshevik pogroms, etc. From the standpoint of 'democracy in general' or 'pure democracy', it is really ridiculous that advanced, civilized, and democratic countries, which are armed to the teeth, should fear the presence of a few score men from backward, famine-stricken and ruined Russia, which the bourgeois papers, in tens of millions of copies, describe as savage, criminal, etc. Clearly, the social situation that could produce this crying contradiction is in fact a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

12. In these circumstances, proletarian dictatorship is not only an absolutely legitimate means of overthrowing the exploiters and suppressing their resistance, but also absolutely necessary to the entire mass of working people, being their only defence against the bourgeois dictatorship which led to the war and is preparing new wars.

The main thing that socialists fail to understand and that constitutes their short-sightedness in matters of theory, their subservience to bourgeois prejudices and their political betrayal of the proletariat is that in capitalist society, whenever there is any serious aggravation of the class struggle intrinsic to that society, there can be no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dreams of some third way are reactionary, petty-bourgeois lamentations. That is borne out by more than a century of development of bourgeois democracy and the working-class movement in all the advanced countries, and notably by the experience of the past five years. This is also borne out by the whole science of political economy, by the entire content of Marxism, which reveals the economic inevitability, wherever commodity economy prevails, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that can only be replaced by the class which the very growth of capitalism develops, multiplies, welds together and strengthens, that is, the proletarian class.

13. Another theoretical and political error of the socialists is their failure to understand that ever since the rudiments of democracy first appeared in antiquity, its forms inevitably changed over the centuries as one ruling class replaced another. Democracy assumed different forms and was applied in different degrees in the ancient republics of Greece, the medieval cities and the advanced capitalist countries. It would be sheer nonsense to think that the most profound revolution in human history, the first case in the world of power being transferred from the exploiting minority to the exploited majority, could take place within the time-worn framework of the old, bourgeois, parliamentary democracy, without drastic changes, without the creation of new forms of democracy, new institutions that embody the new conditions for applying democracy, etc.

14. Proletarian dictatorship is similar to the dictatorship of other classes in that it arises out of the need, as every other dictatorship does, to forcibly suppress the resistance of the class that is losing its political sway. The fundamental distinction between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of other classes – landlord dictatorship in the Middle Ages and bourgeois dictatorship in all the civilized capitalist countries – consists in the fact that the dictatorship of the landowners and bourgeoisie was the forcible suppression of the resistance offered by the vast majority of the population, namely, the working people. In contrast, proletarian dictatorship is the forcible suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, i.e., an insignificant minority of the population, the landowners and capitalists.

It follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as provides an unparalleled extension of the actual enjoyment of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism – the toiling classes.

And indeed, the form of proletarian dictatorship that has already taken shape, i.e., Soviet power in Russia, the Räte-System in Germany, the Shop Stewards Committees in Britain and similar Soviet institutions in other countries, all this implies and presents to the toiling classes, i.e., the vast majority of the population, greater practical opportunities for enjoying democratic rights and liberties than ever existed before, even approximately, in the best and the most democratic bourgeois republics.

The substance of Soviet government is that the permanent and only foundation of state power, the entire machinery of state, is the mass-scale organization of the classes oppressed by capitalism, i.e., the workers and the semi-proletarians (peasants who do not exploit the labour of others and regularly resort to the sale of at least a part of their own labour-power). It is the people who even in the most democratic bourgeois republics, while possessing equal rights by law, have in fact been debarred by thousands of devices and subterfuges from participation in political life and enjoyment of democratic rights and liberties, that are now drawn into constant and unfailing, moreover, decisive, participation in the democratic administration of the state.

15. The equality of citizens, irrespective of sex, religion, race, or nationality, which bourgeois democracy everywhere has always promised but never effected, and never could effect because of the domination of capital, is given immediate and full effect by the Soviet system, or dictatorship of the proletariat. The fact is that this can only be done by a government of the workers, who are not interested in the means of production being privately owned and in the fight for their division and redivision.

16. The old, i.e., bourgeois, democracy and the parliamentary system were so organized that it was the mass of working people who were kept farthest away from the machinery of government. Soviet power, i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat, on the other hand, is so organized as to bring the working people close to the machinery of government. That, too, is the purpose of combining the legislative and executive authority under the Soviet organization of the state and of replacing territorial constituencies by production units – the factory.

17. The army was a machine of oppression not only under the monarchy. It remains as such in all bourgeois republics, even the most democratic ones. Only the Soviets, the permanent organizations of government authority of the classes that were oppressed by capitalism, are in a position to destroy the army's subordination to bourgeois commanders and really merge the proletariat with the army, only the Soviets can effectively arm the proletariat and disarm the bourgeoisie. Unless this is done, the victory of socialism is impossible.

18. The Soviet organization of the state is suited to the leading role of the proletariat as a class most concentrated and enlightened by capitalism. The experience of all revolutions and all movements of the oppressed classes, the experience of the world socialist movement teaches us that only the proletariat is in a position to unite and lead the scattered and backward sections of the working and exploited population.

19. Only the Soviet organization of the state can really effect the immediate break-up and total destruction of the old, i.e., bourgeois, bureaucratic and judicial machinery, which has been, and has inevitably had to be, retained under capitalism even in the most democratic republics, and which is, in actual fact, the greatest obstacle to the practical implementation of democracy for the workers and working people generally. The Paris Commune took the first epoch-making step along this path. The Soviet system has taken the second.

20. Destruction of state power is the aim set by all socialists, including Marx above all. Genuine democracy, i.e., liberty and equality, is unrealizable unless this aim is achieved. But its practical achievement is possible only through Soviet, or proletarian, democracy, for by enlisting the mass organizations of the working people in constant and unfailing participation in the administration of the state, it immediately begins to prepare the complete withering away of any state.

21. The complete bankruptcy of the socialists who assembled in Berne, their complete failure to understand the new, i.e., proletarian, democracy, is especially apparent from the following. On February 10, 1919, Branting delivered the concluding speech at the international Conference of the yellow International in Berne. In Berlin, on 11 February, 1919, Die Freiheit, the paper of the International's affiliates published an appeal from the Party of 'Independents' to the proletariat. The appeal acknowledged the bourgeois character of the Scheidemann government, rebuked it for wanting to abolish the Soviets, which it described as Träger und Schützer der Revolution – vehicles and guardians of the revolution – and proposed that the Soviets be legalized, invested with government authority and given the right to suspend the operation of National Assembly decisions pending a popular referendum.

That proposal indicates the complete ideological bankruptcy of the theorists who defended democracy and failed to see its bourgeois character. This ludicrous attempt to combine the Soviet system, i.e., proletarian dictatorship, with the National Assembly, i.e., bourgeois dictatorship, utterly exposes the paucity of thought of the yellow socialists and Social-Democrats, their reactionary petty-bourgeois political outlook, and their cowardly concessions to the irresistibly growing strength of the new, proletarian democracy.

22. From the class standpoint, the Berne yellow International majority, which did not dare to adopt a formal resolution out of fear of the mass of workers, was right in condemning Bolshevism. This majority is in full agreement with the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, and the Scheidemanns in Germany. In complaining of persecution by the Bolsheviks, the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries try to conceal the fact that they are persecuted for participating in the civil war on the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. Similarly, the Scheidemanns and their party have already demonstrated in Germany that they, too, are participating in the civil war on the side of the bourgeoisie against the workers.

It is therefore quite natural that the Berne yellow International majority should be in favour of condemning the Bolsheviks. This was not an expression of the defence of 'pure democracy', but of the self-defence of people who know and feel that in the civil war they stand with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

That is why, from the class point of view, the decision of the yellow International majority must be considered correct. The proletariat must not fear the truth, it must face it squarely and draw all the necessary political conclusions.

[illegible]

1. Parliamentarism is the form of political representation characteristic of the capitalist regime. In the field of principle the critique of the Marxist Communists in regards to parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy in general shows that the franchise granted to all citizens of all social classes in the elections of the representative organs of the State cannot prevent the whole governmental machinery of the State constituting the committee of defense of the interests of the ruling capitalist class, nor can it prevent the State from organizing itself as the historical instrument of the bourgeoisie in the struggle against the proletarian revolution.

2. The Communists categorically reject the possibility of the working class conquering power by a majority in Parliament instead of attaining it by an armed revolutionary struggle. The conquest of political power by the proletariat, which is the starting point of the work of Communist economic construction, implies the violent and immediate suppression of the democratic organs, which will be replaced by the organs of the proletarian power, the workers' councils. With the exploiting class being thus deprived of all political rights, the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is to say, a system of class government and representation, will be realized. The suppression of parliamentarism is therefore a historic goal of the communist movement; still more, it is precisely representative democracy which is the first structure of bourgeois society which must be overthrown, before capitalist property, before even the bureaucratic and governmental State machinery.

3. The same goes for the municipal or communal institutions of the bourgeoisie, which are falsely regarded as liable to be opposed to the governmental organs. In fact their machinery is identical with the state mechanism of the bourgeoisie. They must also be destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat and replaced by local Soviets of the workers' deputies.

4. While the executive, military and police machinery of the bourgeois State organizes direct action against the proletarian revolution, representative democracy constitutes a means of indirect defense which works by spreading among the masses the illusion that their emancipation can be attained through a peaceful process, and the illusion that the form of the proletarian State can also have a parliamentary basis with the right of representation for the bourgeois minority. The result of this democratic influence on the proletarian masses has been the corruption of the socialist movement of the Second International in the domain of theory as well as in that of action.

5. The task of Communists at the present moment in their work of ideological and material preparation for the revolution is above all to remove from the minds of the proletariat those illusions and prejudices, which have been spread with the complicity of the old social-democratic leaders in order to turn it away from its historical path. In the countries where a democratic regime has held sway for a long time and has penetrated deeply into the habits and mentality of the masses, no less than into the mentality of the traditional socialist parties, this work is of a very great importance and comes among the first problems of revolutionary preparation.

6. Possibilities of propaganda, agitation and criticism could be offered by participation in elections and in parliamentary activity during that period when, in the international proletarian movement, the conquest of power did not seem to be a possibility in the very near future, and when it was not yet a question of direct preparation for the realization of the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the other hand in a country where the bourgeois revolution is in course of progress and is creating new institutions, Communist intervention in the representative organs can offer the possibility of wielding an influence on the development of events in order to make the revolution end in victory for the proletariat.

7. The present historical period was opened by the end of the World War with its consequences for the social bourgeois organization, by the Russian Revolution which was the first realization of the conquest of power by the proletariat, and by the constitution of a new International in opposition to the socialdemocracy of the traitors. In this historical period, and in those countries where the democratic regime achieved its formation a long time ago, there is no possibility of using the parliamentary tribune for the communist revolutionary work, and the clarity of propaganda, no less than the efficiency of the preparation for the final struggle for the dictatorship, demand that Communists conduct an agitation for an election boycott by the workers.

8. In these historical conditions, where the main problem of the movement is the revolutionary conquest of power, the whole political activity of the class party must be devoted to this direct end. It is necessary to shatter the bourgeois lie according to which every clash between opposing political parties, every struggle for power, must necessarily take place within the framework of the democratic mechanism, that is through elections and parliamentary debates. We cannot succeed in destroying that lie without breaking with the traditional method of calling the workers to vote in elections side by side with members of the bourgeoisie, and without putting an end to the spectacle where the delegates of the proletariat act on the same parliamentary ground as the delegates of its exploiters.

9. The dangerous idea that all political action consists of electoral and parliamentary action has already been spread too widely by the ultraparliamentary practice of the traditional socialist parties. On the other hand, the distaste of the proletariat for the treacherous practice has lent favourable ground to the mistakes of syndicalism and anarchism which deny all value of party's political action and role. For that reason the Communist parties will never obtain great success in propagandizing the revolutionary Marxist method if the severing of all contacts with the machinery of bourgeois democracy is not put at the basis of their work for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the workers' councils.

10. In spite of all the public speeches and all the theoretical statements, the very great importance which is attached in practice to the electoral campaign and its results, and the fact that for a long period the party has to devote to that cause all its means and all its resources in men, in the press, and even in money, helps to strengthen the feeling that this is the true central activity to achieve the aims of communism; on the other hand, it leads to complete cessation of the work of revolutionary organization and preparation. It gives to the party organization a technical character quite in opposition to the requirements of revolutionary work, legal as well as illegal.

11. For the parties which have gone over, by a majority resolution, to the Third International, the allowance of the continuation of electoral action prevents the necessary sorting out and elimination of social-democratic elements, without which the Third International would fail in its historic role, and would no longer be a disciplined and homogeneous army of the worldwide revolution.

12. The very nature of the debates which have parliament and other democratic organs for their theatre excludes every possibility of passing from a criticism of the policy of the opposing parties, to a propaganda against the very principle of parliamentarism, and to an action which would overstep parliamentary rules – just as it would not be possible to get the right to speak if we refused to submit to all the formalities established by electoral procedure. Success in the parliamentary fencing will always depend only on the skill in handling the common weapon of the principles on which the institution itself is based, and in dealing with the tricks of parliament procedure – just as the success in the electoral struggle will always be judged only by the number of votes or seats obtained. Every effort of the Communist parties to give a completely different character to the practice of parliamentarism cannot but lead to failure the energies spent in that Sisyphean labour, whereas the cause of the Communist revolution calls these energies without delay on the terrain of the direct attack against the regime of capitalist exploitation.